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Sermon No. 1

Mohammedan Women

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MOHAMMEDAN WOMEN

Address by Rev. LEWIS E. GLENN Missionary Fayoum, Egypt, at the HARVEST HOME CAMP MEETING, Indianapolis, Ind., Lord's Day afternoon, August 1, 1909 : : : : :

VEILED MOSLEM WOMAN

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FOR whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach except they be sent? even as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings of good things!—Romans x, 8-15.

In this little scripture lesson, Paul gives the two sides of the missionary work. First, he shows how discouragingly hopeless it is for the people in heathen lands with no one to give them the Word —without a preacher. Then Paul promises a great blessing upon those who bring "glad tidings of good things."

I wish to speak for a little time about this dark side, and after that about the bright side and the blessing God gives when the "glad tidings come."

Another World.

It is very difficult to speak to American people about conditions in the Mohammedan country where we have been laboring. It is just the opposite to this land. When a new missionary arrives, for days and weeks he is astonished at the strange customs, and perhaps at the end of that time he receives a great shock over something not before observed. Our

chart divides the world into two hemispheres, and this hemisphere is another world to him. When you cross the seas you feel you are in another world.

But I wish to speak especially at this time about the Mohammedan women and their oppression in the Mohammedan countries. In America, I suppose, women are more honored than in any other place under the sun. They gazed at us in astonishment as we told of the places filled by American women. How that side by side with their husbands and brothers they occupy positions of responsibility in the churches and elsewhere. They say, How can these things be?

Right in the beginning of her existence, when the girl baby is born into the family, sadness comes. It is a proverb of that land that "the threshold of the house weeps forty days when a girl is born." She is unwelcome at birth, unloved, unhonored; and leaves the world unmourned at death.

More Than 100,000,000

I speak to you about more than one hundred millions of human beings without God and without hope unless the present generation shall awaken by the mighty Spirit of God to bring them the "glad tidings of great joy." Think of it! a hundred millions of people! More than the population of this great land

from Maine to California, dying without God, without one ray of hope!

In the very beginning of life the Mohammedan girl baby is despised, while the boy is honored. At his birth they have a feast. Oftentimes a band announces that a son has been born to some rich family. But the poor girl is despised, and the Mohammedan will often lie and say it is a boy to hide the disgrace from his neighbors. How different her life from that of the American girl, with opportunities for education and religious and social advancement! If she goes to school it is for a very brief period. Perhaps she goes to a mission school, where she is bright and happy, but when she reaches the age of ten to thirteen years —the marriageable age—she is shut up in the home. The little Mohammedan girl is soon married, and if she seeks to continue her studies her husband says to her, "Do you expect to be a lawyer or a scribe that you must read and write every day?

In all the families, girls are hated and boys exalted. The boys have all the privileges, the girls have none. They are trained from birth to understand that they are hated, despised, rejected, beneath notice.

Fearful Fate of the Poor

Perhaps, from a poor family one of these little waifs is put out in the home

of some rich man who may have many wives and many concubines. This innocent little waif falls into the wicked hands of this lord of creation and the worst befalls her. Does the law take hold of that man and hurl him into prison as it would here in Indianapolis? Nothing is done. Just such sad cases have happened. I heard of one such little child who returned home. Her father felt so disgraced that he would not speak to her for many days. After that he pointed to a little place in the garden where she should go and dig many days. Finally, when she had a place large enough for her to stand in, he called his son and they poured lime on her and buried the body of this little girl alive to take away the disgrace.

Marriage Customs.

But what about the Mohammedan girl's marriage? She looks forward to the time of her marriage. The marriage ceremony is just as it was in the days of Christ. Witnessing a marriage ceremony you feel at once that you are in Bible lands. It has the Bible atmosphere, at least from the ceremonial standpoint, but, oh, how different! Three days of festivity, beautiful dresses, beautiful pearls! after that, sadness and sorrow. Perhaps she was married to one three times her age. Perhaps other wives, rival wives, presided over the home. The Mo-

hammedan religion strictly allows every man to have four wives and as many concubines as he is able to buy. In such homes there is always sorrow and jealousy.

In the homes of the rich and middle classes the woman is a prisoner. She is not expected to depart from her house inside of one year from her marriage. The four walls that enclose her at the time of her marriage ceremony must enclose her for at least one year. One woman said that she had not seen outside of her house for forty years. She begged the missionary to tell her something of the flowers.

Seldom Prays

In this country women do a great deal of church work. How different it is there! Do they never pray in that land? Oh, yes; but the men do the praying. The woman seldom defiles that sacred place of prayer. Why should she? Is there any hope of Heaven for a creature like her? They do not tell her that she has no soul and that she cannot go to Heaven. But what is the Heaven of the Mohammedan? A beautiful place where the very meanest Mohammedan may enjoy himself, having seventy wives of the virgins of Paradise, and, in addition to that, all the wives he had in this world. These are sad facts and we cannot understand them. It is not possible to

comprehend them in a few moments of time as they are presented here. It takes months and years for these things to dawn upon you as you live among these people.

At the marriage ceremony the husband sees his wife for the first time and oftentimes he is very badly disappointed, as the Mohammedan is very particular. Sometimes he says she is ugly; and he may divorce her the next day without any expense in court. He may divorce her just with his word. Sometimes he does not even say, "I divorce thee," as the law requires, but he says, "Arise, seek another mate. Go to your father." And she knows that settles it.

Awful Form of Dissipation.

A man dissipates there in a little different way from the American man. In America when a man gets his pay he goes on a drunken spree. But there when a man receives his wages he dissipates by marrying and divorcing as many wives as possible. Some of them have been married and divorced several times. It is rather difficult to find a woman twenty years of age who has not been divorced. A young mother finds trouble in the very outset. She has no honor or respect whatever, and is very liable to be beaten by her father, her husband, or even by her own son. The little son sometimes picks up a stone

to hurl at his mother with curses. His father says, "You are a fine boy. You are all right." The father encourages his son to be cruel to his mother. We never have occasion for some of these songs you sing in America, "You Have Only One Mother, My Boy." To say, "Remember your mother's prayers," does not go very far. In fact, it is a very uncommon thing for her to pray. Why should she? Would she like to go to her husband's Paradise where he has more wives? She has quite enough rivals here.

A man is not expected to answer his wife's questions. He is never expected to talk with her, only when he gives her orders. If they both must go on a journey he will walk far ahead of her so that no one will suspect that the poor creature plodding in the dust is his wife. He does not care to be disgraced in public.

One class of people living in Egypt are called Christians, but they have so taken up these old customs that it is hard to distinguish them from the Mohammedan. Their marriages are conducted in about the same way. Their treatment of the women is about the same, except the divorce.

It was very difficult to get a native convert to treat his mother with respect.

Farmer's Wives

The farmer of the poorer classes per-

mits his wife to go out. She is not veiled nor shut up at home, for she has much work to do. When they go to market he often carries nothing, while she carries a large child, and perhaps a large basket, and also keeps the donkey at a good pace. These women do everything they can to please those old sore-headed husbands. All the time that sword of divorce is hanging over the wife's head. Perhaps in a fit of anger he will divorce her by what they call a triple divorce. If he does this he cannot take her back, though he may want to do so, until she is married to another man and divorced. It is said that Mohammed instituted that idea to shame them. This is the thing she dreads all the time. If her husband becomes rich it is a detriment to her. He will bring more wives to the house. So she tries all she can to get every dollar out of his hands. As long as he is poor he may show some signs of love. It is said that when a woman is cooking a dinner she does not know but that she will be divorced before the meal is eaten. Many other sad things might be told about these poor mothers which we shall not dwell upon this afternoon. Many of these women have been married ten, fifteen, or even twenty times, and soon old age comes on in this life of shifting from home to home, and an early death overtakes them. But what hope is there for

them then? Here in the United States with the laws in favor of religious liberty, with an open Bible in our hands filled with rich promises to all who humble themselves before God, how happy we can be in our dying hour! But what of these poor creatures! Nothing but dark despair confronts her.

Tourists who visit in that country say that the Mohammedan man is very pious. He will pray on the street, scarcely stopping to look at you, he is so devout; but when you get a glimpse at the inside of his life, when you understand something of his home, you cannot believe much in his prayers.

But there is a bright side to this dark picture; thank God! If there was no sunshine behind this dark cloud it would indeed be terrible. I thank the Lord for the privilege we had a few years ago of going to that dark country. We landed in a strange land, not knowing a word of the language, among people clothed in a strange garb. We wondered why so many women came out to meet us, but we were told that they were all men, although they all wore dresses. Later we saw the women, and observed that they wore large black veils over their faces. Sister ———said, "Oh, the poor lepers!" And the Mohammedan woman is worse than leprous.

Light in Egypt

Before we learned to speak their language we had the opportunity of dealing out the Word of Life to the people, and God sent it home; praise be to His name! One convert was rather a leader of a gang of robbers that would go out from the town of Fayoum and rob the farmers. A short time after the death of our little son we felt a great emptiness in our home and desired to go out to the convent in the edge of the desert and visit his little tomb. While we were there, as yet scarcely able to speak the language, this young fellow, a stone mason, was helping to build tombs in the convent. We said no word to him. We returned home, and the next Sabbath morning when we were beginning our meeting here came this fellow. So wicked was he that people in the town were afraid of him. He had walked all the way to that meeting. He said when he saw us something got hold of him. He came and prayed like his heart would break, confessing his wickedness. He went right to the bottom and received a blessing that stands by him. I thank God that His power to change wicked men is just the same in every land. Hallelujah! This young man was so marvelously changed, and would go out on the streets with us and testify. He is still preaching the Gospel and giving out his ringing

testimony of the power of God to save. Hallelujah!

An Awakening

Last winter, when things had apparently been very dull for a little time, my wife went to another town where we were holding meetings without very much success. While she was away a telegram came to me, saying, "Come." It seemed very important. I did not know who might be dying or what was taking place. At first I thought I would walk, the distance being about ten miles, but waited for the train. When I arrived at the meeting place I met a native preacher, and asked him at once what the matter was. He said "There is a revival on." I was greatly and pleasantly surprised to find that a revival had broken out. It was blessed to give the word of truth to those people. They are given to stealing and other bad practices of that kind, and it was beautiful to give out the message to them of how to get right with God and to see fifteen or twenty of them crying to God at one time to save them from their sins. It was also beautiful to see their lives after He did save them. The news of this revival spread and they sent for us to come to other places. There are villages there that we have not yet reached, where they have sent calls; and if any of you feel like going you will find an open door.

One old man came in from away out in the desert. The desert is a desperate looking place and the people who infest the desert are a bad lot. Many of them will kill a man for a cigarette or for a watermelon. Human life is worth nothing in their hands. This man came into our meetings and confessed his sins, saying that he was the worst man in the world. While he was praying in this way his face brightened up. God had put His sanction on his prayer. He testified to great joy. He said to me, "Why not come to my village where I am staying? It is a long way, but they have never heard any preaching. There are old gray-headed men, many of them, waiting for the message you have. Sometimes the priests will come to our village, not to preach, but to gather up the corn of the people. The people all kiss their hands and give them their corn. Come out and preach to us."

Village Preaching

Sometimes we would visit through a town. Some little towns have thirty thousand inhabitants. Such towns are called mere villages. The cultivated land of Egypt is less than one-third the area of the state of Indiana, and supports about 12 million people, or one thousand to every square mile. It is a thickly populated country. If you could see their great markets you would say it looked

like the Judgment Day. They will gather in great numbers—crowds of people buying and selling in those great markets. While visiting in the town where we worked in last year, and where we held a revival, we would go out calling from home to home. We would perhaps not get into more than one home at a time. We would enter this home, and the woman would go out calling her neighbors and friends to come in. In this way we were able in one home to speak to thirty or forty women, speaking the Arabic language, and praying with them. Such work is very exhausting, and perhaps we would grow weary and start on. But as we passed the homes they would say, "Come in and speak but two words of the Gospel. Come in!" It is very hard to refuse them.

Coptic Girl's Experience

When we talk to those poor women who are counted on a level with the donkeys, they say, "This is a beautiful message, but it is not for us. Talk to the men." But one of these poor women came into the meeting and was saved in a marvelous way. She began to pray earnestly, but she could not read. After she was saved, a burning desire came into her heart to help others in her quarter of the town. She tried to do something for the many other women who knew less of Christ than she. The people

live huddled together, and it is not hard to get a congregation. She had a Bible in the house, but nobody could read it. This woman scarcely knew what to do. Finally she said, "We will just open this book and gather around it;" so they knelt around the Book.

Cry For Laborers.

This afternoon my heart is moved when I think of the bright workers in this land battling to get people to listen to the Gospel when all these millions are pleading to hear of the Savior, and only a little company left behind to struggle with the great needs before them. How are we going to account for this people? I am not going to call them my people, but I call them your people. I believe in that great Day of account I can give an account more easily than some of the rest of you unless you stir yourselves up to become more interested in that lost race. I feel very much at home among those people. I think it is a greater cross to be here than to be in Egypt. There, so near where the Savior suffered and died, such cruelty and darkness calling for the light! Our little company cannot supply the province where we are working. We are not able to reach all who are needing, and many who are begging for the Gospel. There, so near where the patriarchs lived, where Abraham dwelt in tents with those

who were heirs with him of the promise, where Jesus Himself walked,—such scenes, taking us back three, four, and even five thousand years, seem more homelike and real, and America seems like something new springing up.

We had the privilege of visiting the Holy Land and standing on Mount Olivet, perhaps on the spot where our blessed Lord took His departure from this world. How full of sorrow and sin this world has been since His departure! Why is His coming delayed? Millions are dying, hearts are breaking. Why dost Thou delay Thy coming? we cry. Better question, When will we evangelize this lost world, and bring to it the news of the Christ and thus hasten His appearing